

Washington, DC - On Wednesday, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to mandate states institute a photo identification requirement and proof of citizenship at the voting booth for all federal elections. H.R. 4844, introduced by Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL), would require by 2008 that all American citizens provide photo identification at the voting booth in order to cast a ballot. By 2010, voters they must provide both a photo identification and proof of citizenship, by way of a passport or birth certificate.

Rep. Charles Gonzalez stated, "Why are we asking individuals to show proof of citizenship to vote when candidates do not have to show proof to run? To run for office a person just has to sign a piece a paper saying they are a citizen, which is the same we have asked of voters for years. Why is an attestation not enough now?"

The House Administration Committee, which has jurisdiction over election issues, held only one hearing on H.R. 4844, but Republicans, as part of the field hearings on immigration this summer, raised the topic of voter identification and fraud at two hearings in New Mexico and Arizona.

"In bringing this bill to the floor, Republicans in the House attempted to portray themselves as having done something to protect the electoral process from fraud. The problem with this picture is that there is no substantive evidence showing widespread voting fraud involving citizenship misrepresentation. The problems we have seen, either duplicate voter registrations or ineligibility issues, our legal system has addressed fully and promptly. What we should be focusing on instead are the problems of electronic voting machines without paper trails and the harassment and intimidation of minority voters at polling stations. This bill is a sham."

The bill, reported out of committee by a party line vote, 4-to-3, would mandate identification requirements in all 50 states. For states that allow mail-in ballots, voters would have to submit a copy of photo identification along with the ballot for it to be accepted.

It passed in the House with 228 votes for and 196 against.